

# Physical Design Considerations

## Downtown/Lakeshore Redevelopment Plan



### PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENTS & MAINTENANCE NEEDS

In addition to specific project activity, there are basic physical improvements and maintenance needs considered necessary or desirable for the Downtown. Maintenance needs are addressed first, but note that some areas need both maintenance and improvement.

#### Maintenance

##### Street Cleanup

Like many urban centers, the City experiences the seemingly never ceasing problem of litter and debris along Downtown streets. While this problem relates more to public and merchant attitude and action (or inaction), it typically falls on the City to handle cleanup. Failure to do so only exacerbates image concerns. To help reduce litter, while promoting a positive Downtown image, we recommend the City:

- ◆ Adopt and enforce a strict anti-litter ordinance. Erect litter enforcement penalty signs.
- ◆ Prepare and implement a street sweeping program for the core Downtown. During the April through October period, all streets should be cleaned at least once per week. At peak use periods, the parkway/loop may require more frequent cleaning. To achieve the highest benefit, cleaning should occur during non-business hours.

#### Western Avenue Streetscape

The Western Avenue streetscape suffers from a lack of maintenance. Banners are either missing or torn and faded. As needed, brick pavers should be repaired, vegetated terraces and tree grates cleaned of weeds, and new banners erected.

#### Muskegon and Webster Terraces

The Muskegon and Webster terraces (green space between the curb and sidewalk) need on-going maintenance. In most instances, the responsibility for this lies with the adjoining private property owner. However, areas owned by public entities tend to be under maintained and should receive proper attention.

#### Mall Entries

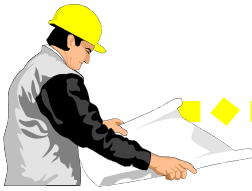
Brick pavers and walks need repair and cleaning, weeds need to be removed from plant beds/areas, and litter removed. The unpaved parking lot on the east side of the Mall should be paved.

#### Lighton Park

The wood sculpture/water fountain is not functioning, benches need repair, trees need trimming, and litter abounds.

#### Tree Removal/Trimming

Trees provide a positive element to the Downtown. However, there are locations where existing trees block the essence of the Downtown as an urban place, or block building identification signs or views of the waterfront, etc. Examples include:



## Physical Design Considerations

### Downtown/Lakeshore Redevelopment Plan

- ◆ The Muskegon City Hall sign along Terrace is blocked by trees. The color of the sign also blends with the building wall.
- ◆ Poor quality trees and other vegetation along the north side of Terrace, west of Western Avenue, block potential lake views for traveling motorists.

#### Clay Street Public Parking Structure Sign

Improve the parking sign at the entry to the Clay Street Public Parking Structure. The sign looks dated and non-professional. It is difficult to read the “free parking” notation. Also, entry doors on the various decks need lights.

### PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENTS

#### Pedestrian Activity Pathway

Develop a unified pedestrian activity pathway linking Maritime and Guest Center Functional Districts. The proposed route is shown on the Project Focus Area graphic. The pathway should include at least three pedestrian crossing points (Heritage Park, Third Street, and Terrace). The pathway should compliment/supplement the proposed Shoreline non-motorized trail.

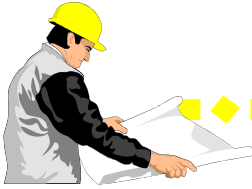
#### Redesign of Lighton Park

Lighton Park should be redesigned to serve as a highly visible entry feature for incoming motorists to the Downtown and the Downtown loop. It is recommended trees be selectively removed to offer open/through views of the park. A lighted water fountain and/or sculpture should be added as central focal point.

To provide additional interest and color, a display of municipal flags on large poles could be added along the perimeter of the site. We suggest that flags representing the United States, State, County, and Municipal governments within the County be displayed. A flag display may be particularly appropriate given the nearby location of the City and County Buildings, designation of the City as the County Seat, and desire of the City to serve as the cultural, entertainment, and employment center of the county as a whole. This feature offers opportunity for the City to exhibit a bond with neighboring municipalities. A secondary benefit is that

Figure 7.1 New Design for Lighton Park





## Physical Design Considerations

### Downtown/Lakeshore Redevelopment Plan



the feature is likely to serve also as a recognized “Downtown” landmark. A conceptual sketch of this improvement is shown in Figure 7.1

#### Unified Sign Program

A unified identification and directional sign program should be developed and implemented for the Downtown. These include signs for placement at public facilities, along the Downtown vehicular loop, and various directional signs to public facilities and services. We recommend signs be of a more traditional, versus contemporary or standard MDOT, design.

#### Streetscape Guidebook

The City should prepare a streetscape/landscape guidebook for use by entities undertaking development and redevelopment projects in the Downtown. The guidebook should include basic, minimal, landscape parameters, with detail on the themes of the various functional areas. A suggested range of appropriate streetscape materials (plants, lighting, screens, etc.) And design concepts should be provided.

The guidebook should be linked with the City’s site plan review process.

#### Muskegon and Webster One-Way Pair

Until Shoreline Drive is fully in place and functional for a period of two years, we recommend the one-way pair remain unchanged. A two-year period is needed to assess the overall impact on traffic circulation and the potential for system modification. During that period, however,

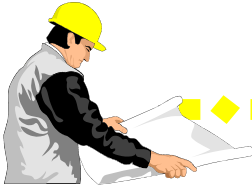
on-street parking could be permitted (one lane per roadway) based on an examination of adjoining land uses and impacts on pedestrian movement. With on-street parking, a potential reduction in speed limit may be warranted.

#### Parking

Adequate parking exists in the Downtown for virtually all activities and events. However, as with most cities, the location of that parking is often perceived as inconvenient.

We recommend that new parking along the waterfront, except for employment areas, be limited. Parking should be located away from the waterfront to encourage linkage with the Guest and Entertainment Center and to maximize use and development of water related property. It is important, however, to provide adequate pedestrian connection between parking and activity centers to ensure convenient and safe movement. Where possible, facilities should be designed to utilize joint/shared parking. Greater use of trolleys should be encouraged.

The parking structure on Clay is currently underutilized, but has excellent potential to provide additional high-quality parking. The structure could be particularly important should the Mall be modified to include convention/conference use or otherwise experience high pedestrian traffic. The proximity of the structure to the Mall may provide opportunity for an aboveground, enclosed walkway linking the two facilities.



## Physical Design Considerations

### Downtown/Lakeshore Redevelopment Plan



#### Redesign of Muskegon Mall Exterior

Virtually all entries to the Muskegon Mall exhibit a backdoor appearance. Due to its high visibility from all sides by passing motorists, all major entry points should be redesigned. If the Mall is expanded on the Muskegon Lake side, an upper level walkway along the outside wall facing the Lake could allow excellent views of the waterfront and any associated activities. A concept sketch showing modest exterior facade changes, improving the Mall's appearance, is shown in Figure 7.2

#### Waterfront Development Facades

New waterfront projects should be designed with high-quality, "street side" and "waterside" facades.

#### Waterfront Vistas

The Muskegon Zoning Ordinance should include site development standards which ensure maintenance of public access and allow for views and linkages to the waterfront.

**Figure 7.2 Exterior Facade of Muskegon Mall**

